

Overwhelming show of support

Dewar, planners ecstatic as 2,500 Ottawans turn out to back refugee project

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About 2,500 Ottawa-area residents crammed into the Civic Centre Thursday night to learn how they can participate in Project 4000, the city's ambitious plan to help 4,000 Indochinese refugees.

Even an already-optimistic Mayor Marion Dewar raised an eyebrow as the three large halls overflowed with the enthusiastic throngs.

"We didn't know what to expect," said Dewar, who announced the plan three weeks ago. "But we could only hope for the best."

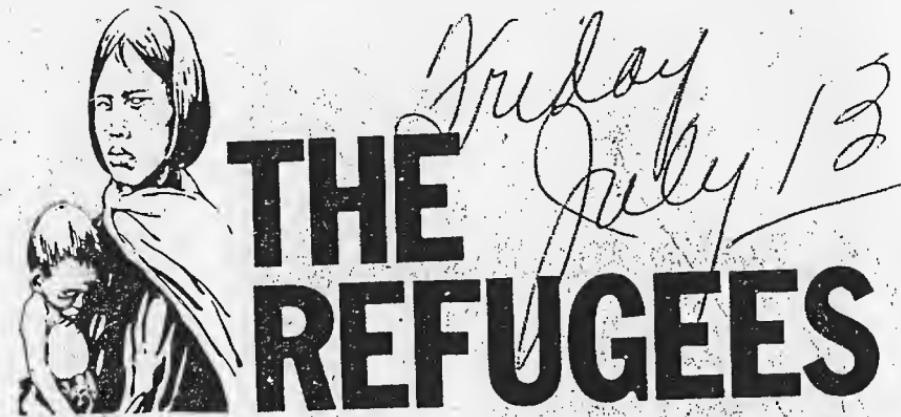
The same feelings were expressed by church and community representatives, folk singer Bruce Cockburn and Vietnamese refugee Tuan Phung who joined Dewar on stage to prime the rally.

Even the audience seemed overwhelmed with the turnout.

One young Vietnamese girl was impressed with the support given the rally. "I'm surprised so many people in Ottawa want to help us," said 16-year-old Ha-Thanh Nguyen, who has been here four years and now hopes her family can be reunited with other relatives.

The audience was moved when a small group of Vietnamese children stood proudly and sang *O Canada*.

But an uneasy tension filled the hall when Rabbi Donald Gerber told the audience of Canada's neglect of Jewish re-



fugees who fled their European homelands during the Second World War.

"Canadians accepted less than one per cent of that refugee population. That lack of responsibility should never happen again. As a Jew, I welcome the opportunity to look beyond my people. To act will give us reason to celebrate," he said.

Pledges to sponsor refugee families made by church and community leaders were ample proof for the audience that Project 4000 has taken off.

A local Chinese community association

announced it will sponsor 100 refugees. The Canadian Labor Congress promised to sponsor three families in Ottawa.

Rev. E. P. Thompson said the United Church of Canada will urge its parishes across Canada to sponsor families.

The number of sponsorship groups in the Ottawa area has quadrupled since the first few days of Project 4000. There are now about 200 church and community groups that have pledged their support of a refugee family.

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